(b) whether it is also a fact that Indian tourism industry is grappling with the problem of shortage of accommodation and tourists are not attracted to India due to the high rate of taxation and the sky rocketing average room rates; and

(c) if so, what steps Government propose to take to attract the tourists to India?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) The tourist traffic from South East Asia has shown an increase of 15.4% in 2005 in respect of the year 2004.

(b) The tourist arrivals in the previous years have been as under:

Year	Foreign Tourist Arrivals	Percentage increase
2003	2.72 million	14.3%
2004	3.46 million	26.8%
2005	3.92 million	13.2%
2006	4.43 million	13%

(c) Does not arise.

Promotion of medical tourism

1606. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR:
SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA:

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether medical tourism in the country is growing 30 per cent annually;

(b) whether small countries like Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia are attracting ten times the medical tourist traffic than India in spite of the country having the price advantage expertise in the field of medicine;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) in what manner India is encashing the advantage it has, in terms of low waiting period when compared to 2-3 weeks in UK, US and Europe;

(e) whether experts want medical SEZs, call-centres for improving medical tourism in the country; and

(f) if so, the action Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) to (c) The Ministry of Tourism does not collect separate information on medical tourist traffic to India.

(d) The Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the Ministry of Health has already initiated several measures to promote Medical Tourism which include promotion in overseas market and production of publicity materials like brochure, CDs and films etc. and their distribution in target markets. The specific promotion at various international travel fairs such as World Travel Mart, London and ITB, Berlin etc. is also undertaken. A guide on select India hospitals of the country for health tourism purposes has been placed on Ministry of Tourism's website www.incredibleindia.org for wider publicity.

(e) No such proposal is under consideration of the Ministry of Tourism.

(f) Does not arise.

Promotion of village tourism

1607. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government have formulated any scheme for promoting Village Tourism in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof showing the status of implementation thereof;

(c) the details of the Village Tourism Projects being implemented in various districts of Andhra Pradesh, indicating the amount sanctioned and released for these projects during the last two years and till date and the progress made thereon, so far; and

(d) the time likely to be taken to complete these projects?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The tourism related infrastructure for identified rural sites is sanctioned